



# The Reporter for Conscience' Sake

The Center on  
Conscience & War

*Working to extend and defend the rights of Conscientious Objectors to war since 1940*

Volume 76

Fall 2019

Perspectives on Korea: Then and Now

## Conscientious Objection to the Korean War

by Bill Galvin

With the end of the Second World War, the draft also came to an end. But in 1948, as the "Cold War" became more heated, the draft was resumed and remained in effect, with minor changes, throughout the US wars in Korea and Vietnam. As was the case until 1970, the law accommodated only those conscientious objectors whose opposition to their participation in war was based on **'religious training and belief,'** meaning a CO's objection was required to be faith-based.

And, as is still CO policy today, two kinds of conscientious objectors were recognized: those who object to direct killing or combat roles, but whose conscience allows them to participate in non-combat roles in the military; and those who object to any participation whatsoever in the military. COs whose conscience allowed them to perform non-combat jobs in the military could be drafted and assigned non-combatant roles. However, those who objected to any participation in the military were deferred under the 1948 law. That means they were not required to perform any service at all.

There were those who felt it was unfair that conscientious objectors would not be required to do any service at all, especially after young draftees were being sent to war in Korea. In 1951, the law changed to require those conscientious objectors to perform "civilian work contributing to the maintenance of the national health, safety or interest," similar to the requirement of COs during WWII.

In the heat of the cold war, there seemed to be a general bias against the CO position, and during the first year and a half of the Korean War, NSBRO (the National Service Board for Religious Objectors, as CCW was known at the time) helped 700 young men who had run into difficulty in getting their CO applications approved. Many of them went through the entire appeals process without success. Some were inducted into the military but continued their appeals through the courts, and some were discharged by court order.

Others refused induction for reasons of conscience.

During the time that COs were deferred and not required to perform any service at all, the anti-CO bias was particularly strong. Even when the alternative service program was implemented in 1951, many draft boards did not understand why one would object to non-combatant military service and classified all COs as such. By early in 1952, about 8,000 COs

would be correctly classified for alternative service, and by the end of the Korean War, a total of nearly 10,000 men would be classified as COs.

### Alternative Service

The system of Civilian Public Service (CPS) camps during WWII was a huge improvement over the way COs were treated during the First World War, but it still had its problems. Quakers and other faith communities felt co-opted by the government, and the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) decided they would no longer run camps for conscientious objectors in

concert with the Selective Service System (SSS). The government also was less than happy with the the CPS system, particularly as they began to realize that all of those justice-minded COs, being together in the camps for extended periods of time, were strategizing about how they would engage with the numerous social movements that were emerging, such as the voting rights movement and desegregation.

After WWII, the government did not intend to recreate a system of camps like CPS, so with the Korean War draft, they needed to devise a different way for conscientious objectors to do alternative service. The new alternative service regulations took effect on February 20, 1952, and the work program began July 1, 1952. COs drafted into alternative service were required to serve for 2 years. The Korean War "ended" in July 1953, so all COs drafted during the war were required to continue to serve even after the armistice was signed.

*continued on page 3*

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- Technical and community support for military conscientious objectors;
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- Support for COs who refuse to register for the draft and COs seeking citizenship who wish to take the nonviolent oath;
- Counseling military personnel with accuracy and honesty through the GI Rights Hotline;
- Truth in military recruitment information;
- Workshops, training, and speakers on any of the above topics.

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# The Reporter

## How Conscientious Objectors Were Classified During the Draft

(Draft counselors will remember this!)

During an active draft, everyone is classified.  
These were the classifications in the era of the Korean War:

- 1-A Available for unrestricted military service
- 1-A-O Conscientious Objector available for noncombatant military service
- 1-O Conscientious Objector available for alternative service (1951 and later)**
- 1-D Reservist or military student (ROTC, military academy)
- 2-A Occupational deferment
- 2-C Agricultural deferment
- 3-A Dependency (hardship) deferment
- 4-A Completed service; sole surviving son
- 4-B Elected official
- 4-C Alien
- 4-D Ministerial deferment
- 4-E Conscientious Objector deferred (1948-1951)**
- 4-F Physically, mentally, morally unfit
- 5-A Over age

The regulations require that registrants be put in the lowest classification on this list for which they qualify.

In 1951, the law changed to require COs to perform **civilian-directed alternative service**. The 4-E classification was eliminated, and a new classification for these COs was created: **1-O**. That meant that all the 4-E conscientious objectors needed to be reclassified.

If they didn't qualify for any lower classification, a CO should be classified 1-O. This didn't always happen, though. Many draft boards, likely acting out of their own anti-CO bias, took advantage of the reclassification requirement necessitated by the 1951 law and wrongly reclassified 4-E COs as 1-A.

If a CO who already was classified as 1-O later applied for a lower classification (such as hardship), they risked being reclassified as 1-A. To those COs, NSBRO (the National Service Board for Religious Objectors, as CCW was known at the time) advised, "great care and tact in making claims for a classification lower than 1-O. The important thing is to **be clear in one's witness to his religious scruples**.... when a board concludes, rightly or wrongly, that a 1-O registrant shows greater concern about a lower classification than he shows about his religious scruples, they are apt to place the registrant in 1-A or 1-A-O."

This in fact happened to a Mennonite who was classified as a CO and applied to be reclassified as a minister. His local board denied his request for ministerial deferment, and reclassified him as 1-A (available for unrestricted military service).

NSBRO and its constituent churches became involved in many cases where these injustices occurred, but it is likely that some conscientious objectors who were not connected to our network were improperly drafted into the military.

# For Conscience' Sake

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*Korean War-era COs, continued from page 1*

During 1951 and 1952, State Directors of Selective Service were charged with identifying and approving various agencies for alternative service assignments for conscientious objectors in their state. Many of the State Directors were not supportive of the CO position and did little or nothing to find jobs for alternative service. Other states, like Delaware, had had very positive experiences with CPS during WWII, and identified many opportunities for COs to serve. NSBRO and its constituent churches helped reluctant State Directors find jobs for COs in their states. Many states would only accept COs from their own state, and some refused to place any COs at all. Some states required that employees sign a 'loyalty oath' for employment with state agencies, and many of these oaths included a pledge to bear arms, which no conscientious objector could sign.

The opportunities for approved CO work varied from state to state, but approved agencies included hospitals of various types (general, psychiatric, tuberculosis); homes for various classes of people (disabled children, adults, and elders, and 'delinquent' youth); educational institutions; agricultural labs; and farms. Some of the mental health hospitals that had hosted CPS workers during WWII were happy to once again get help from conscientious objectors. Of the COs who performed alternative service during this period 55% served in state, county and municipal institutions; 32% in religious and other hospitals; 8% in foreign missionary assignments; and 5% with the federal government.

Many of the jobs were menial or ordinary, such as ward attendants who changed dirty sheets, or janitors, cooks, laundry workers, clerks, and drivers. Other jobs utilized COs with specialized skills, such as auto mechanics, carpenters, typists, plumbers, firemen, engineers, X-ray and lab technicians, and operating room technicians. Some farmers were assigned to the USDA and the American Dairy Herd Improvement Association.

Besides churches and government entities, Goodwill Industries, the YMCA, the Red Cross and similar agencies were among those approved for alternative service. While the overwhelming majority of CO placements were in menial jobs in hospitals, some professionals, like doctors, were placed in positions where they could continue to work in their field and receive a decent salary.

As with the CPS program, there was opposition from unions who felt COs working at reduced wages would bring down wages for other workers. In fact, some Selective Service State Directors were responsible for suppressing wages in their state. One such example is the Menninger Hospital, which wanted to pay COs their standard starting salary, but because of pressure from the SSS State Director, paid COs at a reduced wage. The official policy of the SSS National Office was that COs should be paid the

same as others doing similar work. In some cases, COs found their own work. If a conscientious objector found a job that seemed right for them, they could be assigned there, if the State Director approved.

Some COs worked overseas with church agencies. Those who served in Europe helped rebuild areas still recovering from WWII. For example, in Backnang, Germany, COs built houses and repaired a church. In Greece, COs worked in areas of the country that were devastated by WWII and more recently, Communist guerrilla fighting.

Their work in Greece included education on increased soil productivity, reprocessing the yield for greater market value, gardening and canning. Queen Frederica was impressed by how the rural villagers enthusiastically supported the program and personally expressed her appreciation "for what the American boys are doing." In Turkey, COs helped in the operation of a refugee camp for Bulgarians who had escaped from behind the Iron Curtain.

In Jordan and Egypt, COs worked in agricultural experimental programs to help refugees. In Iraq, COs helped to build sanitation systems. COs served in 41 countries including Paraguay, Mexico, El Salvador, India, Japan, and Israel. Often their work improved the quality of life for the local population, including helping to improve farming techniques, build roads, and harvest water.

Some COs even served in Korea. Conscientious objector Gregory Votow was assigned to Church World Service (CWS) in Pusan. Shortly after he arrived in Korea, the Director of CWS became ill, and had to return to the US, so Votow functioned as the director of CWS while performing his alternative service.

There were those who questioned whether COs working overseas were really contributing to the "national health, safety and interest." However, on December 1, 1954 Richard Whitcomb, the Commanding General of the Pusan Military outpost wrote to Votow saying, "I have had many occasions in the past year or more to observe your conduct of the affairs of Church World Service here in Pusan. You have displayed qualities of resourcefulness, tact, patience, understanding, and individual rectitude, which should serve as an example to all Americans serving in Korea." His letter specifically mentioned Votow's work with the Pusan Hospital Fund Campaign, disaster relief, and orphanages. And a Selective Service report, referring to this letter said, "I know this letter of commendation speaks not alone for the [work in Pusan], but the same could be said for all other church units in Korea, Japan, Formosa, Indo-china, and other Asiatic areas."

*continued on page 7*

# The Reporter

## Seeking Citizenship as a Conscientious Objector in the United States

By Bill Galvin

**The post-World War II/Korean War era was critical in establishing the right of immigrants who are conscientious objectors to become US citizens.**

Conscientious objectors never really had any problems with citizenship until after WWI, during a period of fervent nationalism. On its preliminary forms, the Bureau of Naturalization began asking whether the applicant would bear arms if the government called upon them to do so. When Roskita Schwimmer applied for citizenship, her answer to this question was “no.” Roskita Schwimmer was a well-known pacifist and feminist (she was one of the early leaders of WILPF, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom) who had fled Hungary, eventually settling in the US. Schwimmer’s application for citizenship was denied, and her case ultimately went to the Supreme Court, which ruled she could not become a citizen. “The influence of conscientious objectors against the use of military force in defense of the principles of our government is apt to be more detrimental than their mere refusal to bear arms. The fact that, by reason of sex, age or other cause, they may be unfit to serve does not lessen their purpose or power to influence others” (*United States v. Schwimmer*, 279 U.S. 644, 1929). In other words, conscience is contagious! In his dissent, Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote, “The applicant seems to be a woman of superior character and intelligence, obviously more than ordinarily desirable as a citizen of the United States.”

Two years later, the Court upheld denials of citizenship to a pacifist minister and a nurse, establishing a clear precedent that conscientious objectors – whether or not they were even eligible for the draft - could not become citizens.

That changed in 1946, when the Supreme Court ruled that James Girouard, a Seventh Day Adventist who was willing to perform non-combatant military service as a CO, could be naturalized. The Court ruled that the law does not stipulate that a new citizen must bear arms, and it observed that since there was no bar to a conscientious objector holding high public office in the US, “it is hard to believe that one need forsake his religious scruples to become a citizen but not to sit in the high councils of state” (*Girouard v. US*, 328 US 61).

Martin Ludwig Cohnstaedt had been denied citizenship because, in responding to questions on the naturalization forms, as a CO he indicated that he was unwilling to perform even non-combatant military service. Cohnstaedt’s attorney Osmond Fraenkel, of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), argued that since Congress had established an expedited citizenship process for those who served in the military that *explicitly excluded conscientious objectors*, Congress would not have taken the trouble to exclude COs if it understood that COs could not become citizens. The Supreme Court overturned Cohnstaedt’s denial in 1949. The Court affirmed that while the draft law *does prohibit citizenship* to an ‘alien’ who uses their noncitizen status to *avoid the draft*, noncitizens residing in the US have the same rights as citizens, and asserting one’s rights under the law (such as the right to conscientious objection) **should not bar someone from becoming a citizen** (*Cohnstaedt v. INS*, 339 U.S. 901).

In 1950, two companion bills introduced in Congress threatened to undo the progress made by *Girouard* and *Cohnstaedt*. Senate Bill 4037, The Internal Security Act of 1950, would have barred COs from becoming citizens unless they were willing to perform non-combatant **military service**. The House version, HR 9507, would have prevented any alien who applies for a deferment or exemption under the Selective Service Act, including CO, from ever becoming a citizen - *and they would be deported!* These bills were primarily “anti-communist” bills, in the tradition of the McCarthy era, and the prejudices of the time assumed that pacifists and ‘aliens’ were also ‘un-American.’

The Senate bill was amended to allow conscientious objectors to become citizens, and it provided an alternative oath that did not include the pledge to “bear arms on behalf of the US.” In order to be granted the alternative oath accommodation, conscientious objectors would have to show “by clear and convincing evidence. . .to the satisfaction of the naturalization court that [they are] opposed to the bearing of arms or the performance of non-combatant service. . .by reason of religious training and belief.” It was passed by Congress on September 22, 1950, over a Presidential veto.

*continued on page 5*



# For Conscience' Sake

*COs and Citizenship, continued from page 4*

When Arthur Jost applied for citizenship in 1950 in Fresno, California, before these changes in the law were made, naturalization authorities rejected his application. Jost was the West Coast Director of the Mennonite Central Committee and had served 4 years in Civilian Public Service (CPS) during the Second World War. He appealed the denial in the courts and was denied by a very hostile judge in January 1952. The judge apparently based his opinion on his bias against COs, rather than the merit and sincerity of Jost's claim. Further appeals were rejected by the California Superior and Appellate Courts, and the California Supreme Court refused to hear the case. However, the U.S Supreme Court overturned the rulings of the lower courts in 1954 and he eventually received US citizenship. (*Jost v. US*, 1954, 74 S. Ct. 427). The US Solicitor General had filed briefs with the Supreme Court stating that the lower court decisions should be invalidated, and "confessed error" in the earlier trials.

Meanwhile, in 1951 bills had been introduced in both houses of Congress that would have eliminated the alternative oath for conscientious objectors. Then known as the National Service Board for Religious Objectors (NSBRO), we sent a letter to supporters on Feb. 18, 1952 which reads, in part

The present Senate bill [S 2550] . . . would require an oath with the following requirements:

...(5) to bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by law, and to perform noncombatant service in the armed forces of the United States when required by law, and to perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law.

We have been told by the planners of this bill that it would prevent the naturalization of conscientious objectors.

NSBRO encouraged supporters to be in touch with their representatives in Congress about this. Congress amended the proposal to provide alternative oaths for conscientious objectors. Congress overrode a presidential veto, and the alternative oath became law on June 27, 1952.



One unresolved issue was whether "work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law" might include work for a military contractor, which caused some COs to question whether they could take the oath. After many inquiries and petitions, NSBRO received this response from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) in August of 1953: "[Conscientious objectors] may not modify that portion of the oath regarding work of national importance, by declaring what type of work of national importance [they] will or will not perform." Essentially, CO applicants for citizenship were asked, "If you will not accept military service, will you agree to perform any and all types of civilian work that you might be called upon to perform, even including defense plant work?" If the applicant answered "No," INS would recommend that they be denied citizenship. But to Selective Service, employment in the defense industry was evidence of insincerity. So in order to become a citizen, conscientious objectors would have had to agree to something that could disqualify them as a CO if they were later drafted.

While there were some court challenges to this practice, NSBRO staff met with top officials of INS in 1954 to try to resolve this problem. They pointed out that Selective Service had long understood that many conscientious objectors objected not only to military service, but also civilian work that supported the military and did not assign them to those kinds of jobs. NSBRO also pointed out that conscientious objectors in the military were not required to carry or use weapons, or even be trained in their use. NSBRO pointed out that Sen. Pat McCarran, the author of the bill establishing the alternative oath, had stated that Selective Service standards should be used and that the alternate oath was designed not to violate genuine religious convictions. NSBRO encouraged INS to adopt similar standards. INS took these suggestions 'under advisement.' While they deliberated, several Mennonites were denied citizenship for expressing reservations about the type of service they might be required to do.

On November 18, 1955, NSBRO reported that District Court Judge Joseph Smith of Hartford, CT took decisive action and granted citizenship to Rev. Theodore Leidenfrost, a Lutheran Pastor who would not promise to work in the production of implements of war. The Senate Subcommittee on Immigration was holding hearings on INS at that time, and heard testimony from the Church of the Brethren, Fellowship of Reconciliation, and Friends Committee on National Legislation about this problem facing conscientious objectors. In a letter dated December 23, 1955, John V. Lindsay, Executive Assistant to the Attorney General announced a change in policy: "The Immigration and Naturalization Service has issued instructions that a petitioner for naturalization who expresses willingness to perform work of national importance under civilian direction will not be interrogated further regarding the types of such work he is willing to perform." *continued on page 6*

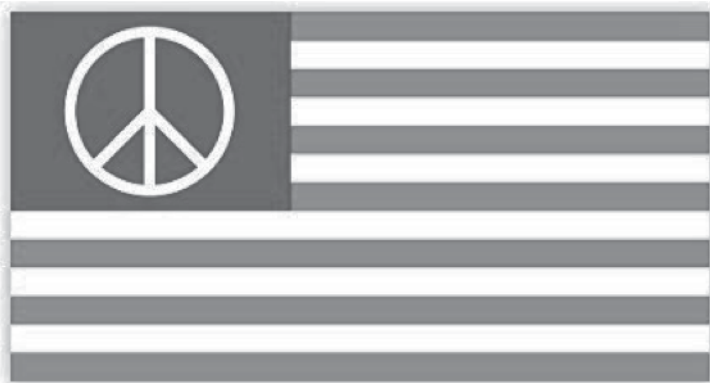
# The Reporter

*COs and Citizenship, continued from page 5*

The cases of such petitioners, including those who are unwilling to work in a munitions or defense plant, will be presented to the courts with favorable recommendations.” NSBRO was aware of at least 27 conscientious objectors seeking citizenship whose cases were pending at that time and were affected by this change in policy.

Since that time, the policy has been essentially the same, and is clearly spelled out in immigration documents. CCW assists a handful of people each year as they apply to take the alternative oath, and we have found that some hearing officers are poorly trained on the policy and deny CO applicants for illegitimate reasons, such as not belonging to a historic peace church. These denials can be overturned for qualified COs. Many of the immigrants we assist are moved to request the alternative oath, even though it is clear they will never be drafted because of their age or a disability, for example. Nonetheless, they are called by their conscience. Says one CO recently seeking citizenship,

“Of all the ways to feel compelled, I don’t know why this is so singularly compelling for me. It’s a little uncomfortable to be cast as an objector, as if being in defiance, when it feels like an affirming of a core moral orientation—to not kill. I’m relieved that in the US, we don’t have to consent to giving this up in order to formally belong to a nation. And I’m certainly very grateful to the historic peace churches and organizations like CCW that keep this voice for peace alive.”



## **PUBLIC LAW 414-JUNE 27, 1952** **OATH OF RENUNCIATION AND ALLEGIANCE** **SEC. 337.**

(a) A person who has petitioned for naturalization shall, in order to be and before being admitted to citizenship, take in open court an oath

- (1) to support the Constitution of the United States;
- (2) to renounce and abjure absolutely and entirely all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty of whom or which the petitioner was before a subject or citizen;
- (3) to support and defend the Constitution and the laws of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic;
- (4) to bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and
- (5)
  - (A) to bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by the law, or
  - (B) to perform noncombatant service in the Armed Forces of the United States when required by the law, or
  - (C) to perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law.

Any such person shall be required to take an oath containing the substance of clauses (1) through (5) of the preceding sentence, except that a person who shows by clear and convincing evidence to the satisfaction of the naturalization court that he is opposed to the bearing of arms in the Armed Forces of the United States by reason of religious training and belief shall be required to take an oath containing the substance of clauses (1) through (4) and clauses (5) (B) and (5) (C), and a person who shows by clear and convincing evidence to the satisfaction of the naturalization court that he is opposed to any type of service in the Armed Forces of the United States by reason of religious training and belief shall be required to take an oath containing the substance of clauses (1) through (4) and clause (5) (C).

The term "religious training and belief" as used in this section shall mean an individual's belief in a relation to a Supreme Being involving duties superior to those arising from any human relation, but does not include essentially political, sociological, or philosophical views or a merely personal moral code.



# For Conscience' Sake

*Korean War-era COs, continued from page 3*

## 'Human Guinea Pigs'

The work that was most admired by the public and the press was that of the 'human guinea pigs.' Conscientious objectors serving at the National Institute of Health (NIH) were subjects in a variety of experiments. A doctor at NIH was quoted in *Time* magazine saying, "Things are a lot tougher for these boys than for many in the Army. Considering the kinds of things they go through, they really have to be conscientious objectors to take it" ("Conscientious Guinea Pigs", *Time*, Vol. LXIV, No. 13 (Sept. 27, 1954), p. 54). At NIH, some COs were put on a diet of only enriched rice to help study if such rice could be used therapeutically for patients on restricted diets. One brave (or foolish) conscientious objector allowed scientists to slice a four-inch piece of muscle from his thigh to aid the study of muscular dystrophy.



*Bill E. Miller, Jr, left, and Verl E. Lahr were among the COs who participated in the enriched rice experiments.*

COs assigned to Fitzsimmons Army Hospital in Denver ate food that had been irradiated. As part of the attempts to find 'peaceful' uses for the atom, these experiments studied the effects of irradiation on food and the people who ate the food. Scientists were trying to determine if irradiating food would be a cheaper and more efficient way of preserving it. At the time, just a decade after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, no one knew what effect eating this food would have on the human body. The Denver Post, reporting on these experiments said,

**"This unit of COs who have submitted themselves as guinea pigs to this scientific research work, have proven beyond any doubt, real courage comes in many forms."**

## "Double Jeopardy?"

Another concern for COs of this era was whether those who had been drafted into Civilian Public Service (CPS) during WWII could be drafted again into alternative service in the 1950's. Those who had served honorably in the military were exempt from the draft, but there was no exemption or deferment written into the Selective Service law for conscientious objectors who had performed their alternative service honorably – and some COs found themselves facing the draft again! There was a provision in the regulations allowing the Director of Selective Service to release people early whenever he "deems such release to be advisable." NSBRO staff encouraged such early release for those who had previously served and advocated for a change in the regulations to completely exempt such people from having to report for service to begin with.

"The men so assigned to duty left their homes and families and served their country by performing, for very nominal monetary allowances, work of national importance specified and administered by the United States Government. Conscientious objectors who were called to duty were treated in the same way as persons inducted into the armed forces. Their period of service equaled that of men in the armed forces. Some of the same men who served under the 1940 Selective Service Act are now faced with the prospect of recall to work under the provisions of section 6.j of the 1951 Universal Military Training and Service Act ... A reading of [section 6.j] makes it clear that without any further legislation, it is within the power of the President of the United States to promulgate such regulations deferring or releasing from recall conscientious objectors who have previously performed work under the [Selective Service] Act of 1940" (NSBRO Brief, Dec. 3, 1952). Because of this advocacy from NSBRO, the Director of Selective Service did eventually order the early release of some COs who had served in CPS during WWII, but the change in regulations that NSBRO sought did not happen.

## Prosecutions of Conscientious Objectors

Some conscientious objectors felt that even to register with Selective Service was a form of participating in war that their consciences would not permit them to do. Others who had complied with all the provisions of the law were denied the CO status by their draft boards and refused induction when drafted. Most of them were convicted and received prison sentences.

Quite a few non-registrants who were prosecuted had been conscientious objectors during WWII. One had been a 'smoke jumper,' one of the more dangerous CPS jobs, parachuting into forest fires to fight the blaze. These prosecutions appeared to the pacifist community to be a direct assault on freedom of religion.

*continued on page 8*

# The Reporter

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*Korean War-era COs, continued from page 7*

The average prison sentence for non-registrants was two years, but sentences varied depending on which federal judicial district prosecuted the case. Generally, COs were given harsher sentences than others convicted of other crimes. For example, in Mobile, Alabama four Quaker non-registrants went before a judge who had just given probation to several people who had stolen cars. After they explained their religious convictions, the judge gave them a strong lecture and a year prison sentence.

One particularly egregious case was that of Robert Michener. As a Friend who took the peace testimony quite seriously, his conscience would not allow him to register with Selective Service. He was sentenced to a year and a day, which he served. Upon release from prison, he was registered by the government and classified 1-A, even though he was a conscientious objector, and as a convicted felon, ineligible to be drafted. Six months after getting out of jail he was indicted again—three counts of violating the draft law: failure to fill out a form, failure to report for a physical, and failure to report for induction. The same US attorney prosecuted him before the same judge, and he was found guilty on all three counts and sentenced to five years for each. He was allowed to serve 2 terms concurrently, so he only had to spend an additional ten years in jail. The judge later reconsidered and allowed him to serve all three sentences concurrently, meaning only five more years in jail. Cases like this shocked the moral sensibilities of people of conscience.

In sharp contrast, David and Paul Seaver, twins, were sentenced to 1 day in prison. They had previously served 18 months in prison for failure to register. The judge said, "Because of their deep belief, they took their medicine, and served their penalty, which satisfied the legal requirements." One unusual case was that of Reuben Kaufman, an Amish CO. He refused induction after his CO application was denied. He was sentenced to a year and a day, but was paroled after four months. Shortly after his parole ended, his draft board reclassified him 1-O saying that since "he refused induction for conscience' sake, he must be sincere." He then performed alternative service.

Prison is generally a pretty awful experience. A number of COs coming from rural farming communities were shocked by their experiences. Others accepted it as part of the price they had to pay for being true to their conscience, and handled it relatively easily because of that frame of mind. One CO wrote to Albert Einstein, "I have no regrets, and feel an inner freedom which comes from knowing I have done that which is right." Robert McCorkle, a Taoist CO wrote to NSBRO, "My education has branched into new and interesting fields. I am learning a great deal about narcotics (selling and using), robbery (both armed and unarmed), stealing cars, rape, prison formalities, and a host of other subjects."

Another inmate (not an objector) wrote a letter to our sister organization, the late CCCO (Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors), about two COs he encountered in jail during the Korean war. He talked of the many things they did: donate blood, volunteer for the fire crew, teach bible classes, and said they were "better Americans and Christians than a whole army put together." He implied that he was glad he went to prison, otherwise he would not have met them!

In Montana, two anti-CO bills were introduced in the legislature in 1951. HB 255 would have disqualified anyone who had claimed conscientious objector status from holding public office. After passing the House, it died in the Senate when the committee couldn't agree on 'clarifying' amendments. The first assistant to the State Attorney General had been a CO during WWII, and this bill was apparently an attempt by his political opponents to embarrass him.

The second bill, HB 167, would have defined "military non-cooperation" as a felony. It passed both houses by wide margins, but was vetoed by the Governor as "superfluous." This bill was apparently rooted in anti-Hutterite prejudice. Archer Taylor wrote in the April 16, 1951 *Reporter*, "It is an inflammatory, emotional reaction, involving economic envy, lack of understanding of the colonial life, languages, [and] separateness of the Hutterites. The CO issue is merely a convenient and safe way to release the pent-up resentment."



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## In his own words: Korean War CO, Dan Reeves

"I was in college during that time and was a conscientious objector, which created some consternation at home.... [It was] really uncomfortable in the little Baptist Church in Chapman where we attended. Just by coincidence, there was another fellow in the service from the church who was killed, I think, in an automobile accident about that time, [making it] pretty hard for his parents and several other women in the church to tolerate my being a conscientious objector....

"She was a gold star mother, and so a conscientious objector didn't sit well at all. And I can remember she and some of the other women who taught me – the earliest things I can remember in Sunday School were two little songs, "Jesus loves the little children, All the children of the world" and the other one, "God is Love." **And when I came to the point where I needed to make those a central part of my life, they just couldn't tolerate it. Two or three of them died without ever speaking to me again.**"

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# For Conscience' Sake

## Statement to the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service Anabaptist Churches, September 13, 2019

Greetings in the Name of Jesus.

It is with deep gratitude that we have the freedom and privilege to express our firmly held Christian beliefs to our government. As Anabaptist Christians, we have often experienced our relationship with the U.S. government as a blessing in that we have been granted freedom to follow Christ according to our consciences. We are grateful that you have invited conversation around the question of national service. We are writing to share with you our strongly held Christian beliefs regarding the proposed recommendations of the National Commission on Military, National and Public Service.

Following the teaching in Matthew 5 and in accordance with Jesus' example, we are called to love our enemies, do good to those who hate us, pray for those who persecute us, refuse to violently resist the evildoer, and forgive as we have been forgiven. As conscientious objectors, we believe Jesus commands reverence for each human life since every person is made in the image of God. In following Jesus, we serve in ways that build up, nurture, and encourage rather than destroy. Our opposition to war is not cowardice but an expression of Christ's forgiving love as shown on the cross. We see ourselves as ambassadors of peace.

As churches in the Anabaptist tradition we stand firmly with those Christians throughout history who by conscience were not able to participate in the military. One of the important reasons our spiritual ancestors migrated from Europe to America was for religious freedom, which included not participating in military service. They believed that the state should not coerce in matters of religious conviction. They understood Jesus' teaching to mean that his followers would not join or support armed resistance but would overcome evil with good. To that end, serving others is a core value of who we are as Anabaptist Christians. We encourage church members of all ages and abilities to find ways to bless others both within and outside the church.

In particular, we would like to respond to some of the Commission's interim recommendations:

- We are requesting that no law be enacted that would require universal obligation for men or women to serve in the military.
- As long as a government Selective Service System exists, we request that it continue to be civilian-led.
- We request that protections and alternative service programs be maintained for those who conscientiously object to military service.
- We respectfully request the inclusion of a provision to identify as a conscientious objector at the time of Selective Service registration.
- We ask that the government, both federal and state, not penalize people who do not register for Selective Service as a matter of conscience.
- We recommend that women not be required to register for Selective Service. (For some of us, this grows out of our conviction that no one—man or woman—should be required to register for military service. For others of us, this grows out of our traditional understanding of women's roles.)
- We strongly value service but are concerned by the Commission's conflation of service to the community with military service.
- We do not support sharing information and cross-recruitment of volunteers in our Christian service programs with the military.
- We are concerned by the influence the military has on schools, including efforts to increase military recruitment within schools as well as to incorporate military elements into school curricula. We are also concerned by the disproportionate focus by military recruiters on low-income communities and communities of color.

Thank you for hearing our views. Sincerely,

Beachy Amish

The Brethren Church

Brethren in Christ U.S.

Bruderhof

Church of the Brethren

Conservative Mennonite Conference (CMC)

Evana Network

LMC (Lancaster Mennonite Conference)

Mennonite Central Committee U.S.

Mennonite Church USA

Mennonite Mission Network

Old Order Amish Church

Old Order Mennonites

We express thanks that in the United States our Christian convictions are respected. We are grateful for the Commission's work and commit to praying regularly for our government officials.



### Make Your Voice Heard!

**If you or your congregation have not yet weighed in with your views on the future of Selective Service (Draft) registration and National Service, there's still time! The Commission will take public comments until the end of the year.**

This is the first time in decades that there has been a serious national conversation about Selective Service.

**Please add your voice!**

**You can submit written comments – by December 31, 2019 --** through the Commission's website [inspire2serve.gov](https://inspire2serve.gov),

by email [national.commission.on.service.info@mail.mil](mailto:national.commission.on.service.info@mail.mil),

or by mail: National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service, Attn: RFI COMMENT—Docket 05-2018-01, 2530 Crystal Drive, Suite 1000, Room 1029 Arlington, VA 22202.

For more information, please call us (202-483-2220) or visit our website ([centeronconscience.org/co/conscientious-objection-and-the-draft.html](https://centeronconscience.org/co/conscientious-objection-and-the-draft.html)). Thank you!

# The Reporter

## Korea and the US, 70 Years Later: An Interview with Will Griffin of *The Peace Report*

By Cameran Clayton

### **In what ways are we still living with the consequences of the Korean War? What lessons were learned or not learned?**

Many people are not aware the war is actually ongoing. Though a ceasefire was reached in 1953, the war never officially ended. Nearly 70 years later, North and South Koreans alike continue to live in a heavily militarized environment where provocative weapons systems, military training exercises, and the threat of nuclear war are regular reminders that peace has yet to take hold. The war's continuation demonstrates how antagonisms and militaristic tendencies can become entrenched over time. Generations of Koreans have grown up with this conflict. Families separated by the 1948 partition remain separated. North Korea's economic development has suffered greatly, while South Korea's relative prosperity has come with a price. South Korea has become a stronghold for the US military in East Asia. The US's military presence in South Korea, one of its largest overseas behind only Germany and Japan, has had a tremendous impact on the lives of South Koreans. For example, the South Korean Ministry of Environment has found unacceptable levels of hazardous substances such as benzene, a known carcinogen, and toluene, which has been shown to cause liver, kidney, and brain damage, in the soil and water around US bases. Another unfortunate consequence has been the growth of exploitative military prostitution systems, under which thousands of women have suffered and which have, in recent years, been linked with human trafficking. Some of these women are now seeking compensation and a formal apology. Although South Koreans pay the heaviest price, US citizens pay the remainder. The US spends roughly one billion dollars per year to support its military operations in South Korea (National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019). This is money that could be used to meet real human needs like healthcare, infrastructure, and education. The Korean War played a major role in the entrenchment of the modern military-industrial complex and has demonstrated that wars can drag on indefinitely. With the War in Afghanistan in its 18<sup>th</sup> year, it seems clear there are important lessons that have yet to be learned.

### **You lived in South Korea. What can you tell us about how South Koreans view the war and the US presence there?**

South Koreans on both ends of the political spectrum want the war to end. Korean families are still torn apart and many are tired of living amid constant tensions. Unfortunately, it is extremely difficult for the people of South Korea to speak out against the war or the US presence. The 1948 National Security Act, passed just after the partition of the country at the end of World War II, gives the government the authority to impose severe penalties upon anyone who disseminates 'propaganda' or engages in 'anti-government' activity.

South Koreans have been jailed for criticizing the US and for expressing support for North Korea. Then, in 1949, the Military Service Act requiring all males to serve a minimum of two years in the national armed forces was created. Even though the UN Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) has explicitly recognized Conscientious Objection as a fundamental human right protected under Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, hundreds of COs are imprisoned in South Korea each year. In 2018, South Korea's Constitutional Court finally ruled that the government must establish an alternative service program for COs. Unfortunately, we've already seen that COs are being disqualified unjustly and that the alternative service program is punitive and unfair. South Korea is supposed to be a 'shining example of democracy in East Asia,' but basic human rights are not respected. Despite these difficulties, there have been major demonstrations of resistance to the US presence over the years, most notably in 2002 after US soldiers struck two South Korean school girls with an armored vehicle during a training exercise, and again in 2005 with the expansion of Camp Humphreys. More recently, resistance efforts have grown again with the installation of THAAD.

### **We've been hearing a lot about THAAD. What should we know about THAAD and the ongoing efforts to dismantle it?**

Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) is touted as an advanced missile defense system capable of detecting and destroying incoming missiles. One problem is that it can only detect one or two incoming missiles at a time which means it may not effectively protect against attacks involving multiple missiles. Another problem is that THAAD is viewed by neighboring countries as an offensive system. China, in particular, views THAAD's presence in South Korea as a potential threat and already has engaged in retaliatory measures aimed at crippling South Korea's economy. Local residents around the site are also worried about environmental impacts. THAAD systems emit electromagnetic radiation, the effects of which are unclear. In 2016, the US installed THAAD in the small rural town of Seongju, without consulting local residents, many of whom openly oppose THAAD and the increased presence of US troops in their village. THAAD's construction in South Korea has prompted demonstrations in South Korea, as well as here in the US. THAAD systems cost US tax payers billions (National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018) and mostly benefit weapons manufacturers like Lockheed Martin and Raytheon. Diplomacy is the cheapest and safest way to ensure the security of South Korea, not additional weapons which only ramp up tensions.

*continued on page 11*

# For Conscience' Sake

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*Korea, 70 Years Later, continued from page 10*

**Over the last couple of years, we've witnessed both rising tensions and reasons to be optimistic. How should we interpret recent developments?**

There have been some positive developments in recent years. We've seen both Korean leaders take concrete steps toward reconciliation. There has been a series of historic summits between the two leaders and a joint declaration which has resulted in several de-escalatory measures, such as the removal of mines and guard posts in and around the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), increased economic cooperation, and the establishment of an Inter-Korean Liaison office. **At the same time, the US is a major player in this conflict and it is unclear how committed the US is to peace on the peninsula.** The recent US-North Korea summits may reflect more the Trump administration's desire to look good than its desire to bring about peace. The administration's promise to put a stop to provocative military training exercises is a start but does not go far enough. The US seems likely to maintain its presence in South Korea, particularly considering the administration's ongoing trade war with China. The US military uses its position in South Korea as a means of maintaining dominance in the South China Sea and the Asia-Pacific region writ large. Too much optimism may not be warranted at this stage.

**What does the mainstream media get most wrong about the situation in Korea?**

The mainstream media is in the business of making money and often focuses on what will sell as opposed to what will bring peace to the peninsula. Positive developments are neglected in favor of a 'Kim Jong-un as bogeyman' narrative. Much of the mainstream reporting on Kim Jong-un is exaggerated, such as the rumor that Kim Jong-un fed his uncle to a pack of hungry dogs. By most accounts, Kim Jong-un did, in fact, order the execution of his uncle, though experts agree that the 'hungry dogs' scenario is highly unlikely. At the same time, the mainstream media often fails to be critical of US missteps. Many popular media outlets underreport cases of sexual assault by US troops and fail to investigate the environmental damage caused by US military bases. I am also disappointed by the way the mainstream media exploits North Korean defectors, using their stories to whip up fear of North Korea. We don't usually hear much about the transition process defectors experience when they enter South Korea, which is where many defectors end up. This is often traumatic and typically includes a period of confinement and 'reeducation' meant to reinforce a negative view of North Korea. Once admitted to South Korea, many defectors experience harassment and are treated like second-class citizens. The suicide rate is high among defectors who often exhibit symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. By ignoring these stories, in favor of those that reinforce negative perceptions of North Korea, they ultimately decrease the likelihood of peace.

**You traveled to South Korea with Veterans For Peace, which does a lot to promote peace through its Korea Peace Campaign. Are there any other examples of peace activism going on today that you are particularly excited about?**

Women Cross DMZ (WCDMZ), formed in 2014, is a diverse group of peace activists that includes Nobel Peace laureates, prominent feminist authors, professors, human rights lawyers, faith leaders, and artists. In 2015, the group gained international attention by marching across the DMZ to raise awareness of the ongoing war. They work at multiple levels, from supporting local women's groups to working with government officials in the US and around the world. In 2019, WCDMZ worked with members of Congress to introduce House Res. 152 calling for an end to the Korean War. WCDMZ also partnered with the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), Korean Women's Movement for Peace, and others to form Korea Peace Now!, a global network of civil society organizations, which advocates for peace and women's inclusion in peace processes at the United Nations. WCDMZ has energized the modern peace movement by bringing together some of its most distinguished leaders. This is exactly what we need right now.

**What would you like to see the current administration do to advance peace on the Korean peninsula?**

The first step would be to establish a peace treaty and end the Korean War. Kim Jong-un and Moon Jae-in have expressed a shared commitment to this goal, but it will not be possible without US support. It is unlikely that the current administration will dismantle THAAD or withdraw US troops from South Korea, because it misguidedly views its military holdings there as a major pillar of its regional security strategy. It is equally unlikely that North Korea will give up its nuclear program because it views its status as a nuclear power as vital to its survival. A long-term pattern of trust on all sides must be established. The US could show good faith by easing sanctions on North Korea. It should be quite clear at this point that they are not working. The US should also initiate formal diplomatic relations with North Korea, dial back dangerous rhetoric, and send a powerful message by adopting a 'no first use' nuclear policy. I would also like to see the abolishment or significant restructuring of South Korea's National Security Act. By punishing South Koreans for being critical of the US or expressing support for North Korea, this law prevents open dialogue, is a major obstacle on the path to peace, and is a violation of the human rights of the South Korean people.

*Will Griffin is a veteran of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. A Korean-American, Will lived in South Korea before moving to the US and works with the Korean-American community advocating for the end of the Korean War. He is the founder of The Peace Report, an online news source fighting empire one report at a time. 🌐🌐🌐*



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## *Perspectives on Korea: Then and Now*

### **An Update on the Commission on Military, National and Public Service**

During the first half of 2019, the Commission on Military, National, and Public Service held a series of official public hearings to explore the issues within their mandate. The Commission was established by Congress to “(1) conduct a review of the military selective service process (commonly referred to as “the draft”); and (2) consider methods to increase participation in military, national, and public service in order to address national security and other public service needs of the Nation” (2017 NDAA, section 551(a)). While the public focus is often the inclusion of women in Selective Service registration, that is only part of the Commission’s mandate. They also are exploring the possibility of **ending registration entirely**, or maintaining the Selective Service System (SSS) and proposing changes to it, such as **expanding the rights of conscientious objectors** within the registration process.

While topics of the recent public hearings were varied, the entire discussion was predicated on an acceptance of the use of military force as a legitimate foreign policy tool. Much of the testimony also emphasized the interdependence between the Department of Defense and the Selective Service System, including how dependent current military recruiting is upon information supplied by the SSS.

There is an often-repeated myth that somehow war-making is moderated by the draft. Our own history – and the testimony of contemporary military planners during these hearings – proved otherwise.

On April 24, 2019 the *Commission* heard testimony from Major General John R. Evans, Jr., Commanding General, U.S. Army Cadet Command; Mr. James Stewart, Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness); and Rear Admiral John Polowczyk, Vice Director of Logistics for the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

They all testified that the Selective Service System was important for insuring and enabling their war-making plans. Stewart even pointed out that enacting the draft would show our national resolve in support of war-making efforts. John Polowczyk said, “I think that gives us some ability to plan.”

The testimony about including women in the draft requirement continued to be largely simplified as conservative religious communities opposed, while those advocating for equality, in support. This inaccurate framing distracts us from the true issues at stake: freedom of religion and belief and the right to be free of coerced participation in militarism and war. The idea that full equality under the law should be dependent upon participation with militarism is antithetical to our democratic values.

There did seem to be quite a bit of sympathy among the Commissioners for the position of conscientious objectors, and the Commissioners’ questions and statements seemed to indicate that they are taking our concerns seriously.

The Commissioners and their staff already have met in person with conscientious objectors and representatives of the Historic Peace Churches, and more meetings are taking place in the future. This is encouraging, but we still can do more!

The Commission’s report to Congress, with their recommendations, is expected to be released in March 2020. It may be unlikely that Congress will take action during the election year, but we do expect them to act eventually, especially considering that the current male-only registration has been deemed unconstitutional by the courts. CCW, in coalition with other peace organizations, is making plans now, not only to respond to the Commission’s report, but also to influence Congress to take definitive action in support of freedom of conscience. It is time to permanently discard any notion that the government should be allowed to force anyone to kill against their will.

**Please Make Your Voice Heard: Details on page 9.**